Democracy and Governance

June 2011



USAID promotes public awareness of constitutional rights and the formal justice system through information campaigns.

DEMOCRACY & GOVERNANCE SNAPSHOT

- Develop capacity to improve administrative procedures, hire civil service professionals, and improve service delivery
- Train judges and strengthen the Supreme Court to manage its caseload more transparently and efficiently
- Support the National Assembly to include more effective oversight of the budget and legislative processes
- Improve municipalities' basic service delivery for trash collection, road maintenance, and water distribution
- Train civil-society and providing grants to local non-governmental organizations
- Fund community radio stations and training journalists

BACKGROUND

In the years since the fall of the Taliban, Afghanistan has drafted a new constitution and organized presidential, parliamentary, and provincial council elections. The Afghan government is focused on building its capacity to provide basic services to citizens; establishing a more-effective, accountable, and transparent administration at all levels; and implementing measurable improvements in fighting corruption, upholding justice, and increasing the rule of law.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

USAID's Office of Democracy and Governance projects support participatory processes that involve citizens in national and subnational governance. Projects promote more-accountable, transparent governance, encouraging national unity and serving the needs of the Afghan people. USAID helps develop the capacity of key institutions, including the Independent Electoral Commission, the National Assembly, the Supreme Court, and target ministries and institutions of the executive branch such as the Independent Directorate for Local Governance, and the Civil Service Commission. USAID also provides training to Afghan civil-society organizations to advocate for society-led reforms.

RULE OF LAW AND ANTI-CORRUPTION

USAID's rule of law project has three main components: building the capacity of the judiciary and the faculties of law and sharia; strengthening the judiciary's public legal outreach program; and supporting traditional dispute-resolution mechanisms that foster links between the formal and informal justice systems. Corruption issues are addressed specifically through a range of projects to include strengthening the capacity of, and sustaining activities in the High Office of Oversight, by providing ethics training to various actors including civil servants and the judiciary, and by promoting the enforcement of anti-corruption laws and regulations.

A centerpiece of the new project is its support to traditional dispute mechanisms: building community elders' knowledge of Afghan law, sharia and human rights norms; encouraging alternatives to social practices that are harmful to women and children; and strengthening the connections between state actors and the informal systems. In addition, the program continues to support the Supreme Court by providing professional training to judges and strengthening the capacity of the courts in managing and budgeting.

GOVERNANCE

The overarching U.S. Government objective is to promote a more-capable, accountable, and effective government in Afghanistan that serves the Afghan people and eventually can function with limited international support. The emphasis is on immediately actionable reforms that will deliver recognizable and useful change in the short-

Data as of June 2011

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USAID trains sitting judges regarding legal foundations.



USAID supports municipalities and increases employment through city works programs.

CONTACT INFORMATION

USAID/Kabul 6180 Kabul Place Dulles, VA 20189-6180 (202) 216-6288x4454 0093 (0) 799-794-674 http://afghanistan.usaid.gov kabulaidinformation@usaid.gov term, while also conducting capacity-building and training that builds a base for indigenous, sustained progress in the longer term.

The governance focus spans several areas, including capacity-building assistance and resources to national, provincial, district, and municipal government entities; mechanisms to reform and train the civil service; establishment of operational budgets at the provincial level; technical support to the Afghan Parliament; support to develop community councils at the district level; and assisting elected officials and civil-society groups to inform the citizenry, respond to their priorities, and direct service delivery.

ELECTIONS AND POLITICAL COMPETITION

Transparent, competitive, and credible elections at national, provincial and district levels are a critical component of a democratic system. USAID provides technical support to electoral institutions such as the Independent Election Commission and the Electoral Complaints Commission. It also supports international observation missions, civic and voter education programs, candidate agent training, political parties strengthening, and electoral reform programs through civil society partners, as well as promoting a legitimate, sustainable voter registry system over the long term. Other ongoing efforts include support for issue-based coalition-building, and work on a sub-national level with governors, members of provincial councils, religious leaders, and community organizations on strategic-planning, civic-education, and advocacy.

CIVIL-SOCIETY AND INDEPENDENT MEDIA

USAID promotes the development of a strong and active civil-society sector to help Afghan citizens more effectively participate in the political process, solve community problems, and advocate for good governance. Programs seek to improve the laws that regulate non-governmental organizations, increase civil-society accountability, develop capacity and networks for democratic processes, and increase citizen mobilization and policy engagement.

USAID supports media sector development in Afghanistan to promote the free exchange of information and ideas vital to the democratic process. USAID is building the capacity of broadcast media through technical support, equipment upgrades, hands-on training in balanced and accurate reporting, the development of Afghan media policy/regulatory framework to improve media standards, growth and sustainability, and empower local and individual voices.

Assistance for activities that promote gender equality and the development of women's civic and political leadership is a priority component of multiple civil-society, governance, rule of law, and political processes programs.